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ABSTRACT

The career education movement is briefly summarized, and some of the special problems involved in developing career education programs for gifted and talented students are discussed. The terms "work", "career", and "education" are defined, and it is noted that the term "career education" refers to all activities and experiences through which one learns about, prepares for, and gains satisfactions from work. Some of the existing career education programs (such as Workshops for Careers in the Arts, Washington, D.C. and Project TALENT Demonstration Centers, California) for gifted and talented persons are listed. Six problems (such as the danger of assuming that the gifted and talented have special responsibilities to use their gifts and/or talents in the world of paid employment) in providing effective career education to gifted and talented students are described. (SB)

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CAREER EDUCATION FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED PERSONS

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Introduction

When I decided to undertake the project that eventually lead to the book Jean Hebeler and I co-edited entitled Career Education for Gifted and Talented Students, my motivations were both personal and selfish. First, I knew I had a great deal to learn about both the gifted and about the talented before I could truthfully say that I know that career education can be made meaningful for such persons. Second, I knew that, until someone attempted to speak out about career education for this segment of the population, many would continue to believe that career education (whatever that might be) was certainly limited, in scope, to persons not contemplating college attendance. I felt this kind of false belief must be eradicated in order for the career education concept to be fully understood and appreciated.

I learned a very great deal through this project. One of the first things I learned was that there seem to be at least as many definitions of the phrase "gifted and talented" as there are of the term "career education." Second, I think I learned that, as has been true for years within my own field of counseling, much more attention seems to have been devoted to describing the gifted and talented than to understanding such persons. Third, and by far the most important, I learned that the concept of the gifted and talented, like the concept of career education, is more heavily rooted in personal values and beliefs than in solid research evidence.

Remarks prepared for presentation at the New England TAG Conference, Hartford, Connecticut. December 5, 1974.

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Since finishing the book, I have thought considerably more about the meaning and implications of career education. As I have done so, I have often found myself also thinking more about the significance of career education for gifted and talented persons. My purpose here is to share some of my current thinking with you. I would hope that, by doing so, you may be willing and able to help me think more clearly about this very important subject.

There are only two topics I want to touch on here. First, it seems appropriate that I attempt to summarize, in as few words as possible, what the career education movement is all about and what it is trying to do. Second, I would like to share several of my current thoughts with you regarding what I perceive to be special problems involved in making career education efforts both positive and productive for gifted and for talented persons.

The Essence of Career Education

The meaning of the term "career education" must obviously be related to the ways in which one defines the two words "career" and "education." Because of the way in which I define the word "career," yet another word must be defined at the outset. That word is "work." This four letter word is at the core of the career education concept. There is no point proceeding until we first discuss its meaning in career education.

Thanks to my many critics, I have frequently revised my definition of work. Currently, I am content with the definition I wrote for the official USOE Policy Paper on Career Education recently released. It says:

> "Work" is conscious effort, other than activities whose primary purpose is either coping or relaxation, aimed at producing benefits for oneself and/or for oneself and others.

This definition, while obviously extending beyond economic man, is purposely intended to be considerably narrower than all of life and living. That is, this definition includes the work of the volunteer, the full-time homemaker, the student, and work done as part of one's leisure time. It also, of course, includes the world of paid employment. At the same time, with the restrictive phrase included in the definition itself along with the emphasis given to the four words - "conscious," "effort," "producing," and "benefits" - there are a good many activities in which each of us engages that, in no way, could be included in this definition of work.

It is intended, in career education, that the definition of work include some combination of economic, sociological, and psychological values when a particular individual seeks to discover the meaning and meaningfulness of work in her or his total lifestyle. At its roots, career education views "work" in humanistic terms - as indicative of the human need of all human beings to do - to achieve - to accomplish something that will allow the individual to know both who he or she is and why they exist.

With this definition of work, we have defined "career" to mean the totality of work one does in her or his lifetime. This definition means that each of us has only one career (although we may occupy, at various times, a wide variety of jobs, occupations, and positions). Further, it means that one's career develops beginning in the very early years and extends well into the retirement years.

The word "education" in the term "career education" is defined as the totality of activities and experiences through which one learns. Thus, it is a word that extends considerably beyond the word "schoolong" - i.e., learning that takes place through the formal educational system.

Obviously, then, the term "career education," in a generic sense, is intended to mean all of those activities and experiences through which one learns about, prepares for, and gains satisfactions from work.

There are two basic societal concerns underlying the career education movement. The first is the need to help individuals understand and capitalize on the increasingly close relationships between education and work that exist in our society at the current time. The second is the need to make work a more meaningful part of the total lifestyle of each individual. Both of these have, for years, been expressed by widely varying segments of our soceity - usually as criticisms directed against our formal system of education. Career education, then, represents a response to a call for educational reform.

It is not surprising that this call has evoked a great deal of positive acceptance when heeded by educators. Introduced by USOE Commissioner Sidney P. Marland, Jr. in 1971, career education has been enthusiastically endorsed by both Dr. John Ottina, who succeeded Marland, and by Dr. T. H. Bell, the current USOE Commissioner of Education. Ten states have now passed career education legislation. Forty six states have appointed coordinators of career education in state departments of education. The Congress made career education a part of P.L. 93-380 which was signed into law August 21, 1974. Approximately 5,000 of the nation's 17,000 school districts are operating career education programs during the

1974-75 school year. Never has an educational concept brought about so great a change in so short a time with so little Federal dollars.

Career Education Programs for Gifted and Talented Students

Career education has, among other claims, stated that it is intended to meet the needs of all persons. Certainly, gifted and talented persons are included. At this point, a brief synopsis of currently operating career education programs for gifted and talented persons might be in order.

One attempt to collect examples was undertaken in connection with preparation of the manuscript for the book, Career Education for Gifted and Talented Students. Chapter 8 of that book is devoted entirely to brief descriptions of such examples. Included in this summary is a description of the classical efforts of Dr. Elizabeth Drews at Michigan State University during the 1960s and the long time efforts headed first by Dr. John Rothney, and currently by Dr. Marshall Sanborn at the Research and Guidance Laboratory for Superior Students at the University of Wisconsin. In addition to these two classic efforts, brief descriptions of the following programs are provided:

1. Workshops for Careers in the Arts - Washington, D.C.
2. Interlochen Center for the Arts - University of Michigan
3. D.C. Youth Orchestra Program
4. Summer programs in science career exploration at Harvard University and at Miami University
5. Research Participation Program - American University
6. California's Project TALENT Demonstration Centers

7. Project Opportunity, administered by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
8. Children's Theater - Quincy, Illinois
9. Lincoln School for Disadvantaged Gifted Students - Simpsonville, Ky.
10. Career House - Devon, Pennsylvania
11. Career Education for College Bound Students - Winston Churchill Senior High School, Montgomery County, Maryland
12. Executive Intern Program, Hillsborough County (Tampa) Florida
13. Middle Grades Career Exploration Institute for Teaching Children With Exceptional Ability - Mecklenburg, North Carolina

Most of these programs were special efforts directed exclusively at gifted and/or talented students. Almost without exception, they began prior to formal initiation of the career education concept and were initiated by persons who saw the need for career education long before Sidney Marland first coined the term.

To what extend are career education programs, begun since 1971, including special provisions for gifted and talented persons in their efforts? One indication of this can be seen by studying profiles of career education programs collected as part of a series of 20 career education "mini-conferences" conducted by USOE during the Summer of 1974. Approximately 275 school districts (4 to 8 from each of the 50 states) sent representatives to these conferences. Each school district had been nominated by their state department of education as among the better career education programs in the state. When we examined the program profiles prepared by these mini-conference participants, we found seven who indicated special

provisions were being made for gifted and talented students. These included the career education programs operating in the public schools of:

a. Woodbridge, New Jersey

b. Greenville, North Carolina

c. Nogales, Arizona

d. New Haven, Connecticut

e. Wilmington, Delaware

f. Athens, Georgia

g. Columbia, South Carolina

This, of course, in no way means that the remainder made no provision, but only that they failed to indicate it as a special emphasis. Further, we know of other career education programs not included in the "mini-conferences" with excellent efforts aimed at gifted and talented persons. For example, the New Orleans Center for the Cultural Arts in Career Education operates as part of that city's career education program. Using talented professionals from such areas as jazz music, classical music, theatre, ballet, art, etc., career exploratory and basic career preparation experiences are provided for about 200 highly talented senior high school students from New Orleans schools.

Undoubtedly, this list could be expanded considerably. Without doing so, it seems clear that, while the need for career education is being met for gifted and talented persons in selected communities, it has not even yet been recognized by many others who are currently operating career education programs. We are much concerned about this problem in USOE at the present time and highly hopeful that we will be able to stimulate further exemplary efforts in this area prior to the end of the 1974-75

school year.

Special Career Education Problems for Gifted and Talented Persons

Career education, like any other educational effort purporting to be applicable to all students, faces a number of special problems when we attempt to provide effective assistance to gifted and talented persons. It seems appropriate here to provide very brief descriptions of some of the major problems that must be solved.

First, beginning in the early elementary school and continuing through all of education, intellectually gifted students are often found suffering from "worker alienation" in their primary work roles as students. This is caused primarily by the fact that they already know what their teacher is trying to teach and, understandably, are bored in the classroom. Typical efforts to relate basic academic skills to the entire world of work may not be very appealing to such students. It is, of course, extremely difficult for the typical classroom teacher to find many role models of workers that these students would be motivated to emulate.

Second, while we are asking all elementary school teachers to refrain from emphasizing, in anything but the very broadest terms, today's world of paid employment, it is especially difficult to justidy doing so for highly gifted and talented persons. Not only will occupations be quite different by the time they enter the world of paid employment, but many of these students will be among those who will be active participants in inventing new occupations. Thus, there is a problem of stimulating interest and awareness without stifling creativity.

Third, there are some natural tendencies for the intellectually gifted to become so intrigued with the world of schooling that they find difficulty

generating much interest in the world of paid employment outside of formal education. After all, in an academic atmosphere, they know they can compete very successfully. Why leave such a confortable environment for one filled with much greater degrees of uncertainty? Some intellectually gifted students are sure to be faced with this problem.

Fourth, in the case of highly talented students, we know that, for many talents, unless talent development is begun in the very early years, it is difficult to develop it fully. Yet, if a concentrated emphasis is made in these early years, a lesser emphasis must, of course be placed on other aspects of development. In terms of career development, as part of human growth and development, this can obviously create very special and serious problems for some persons.

Fifth, there is danger in assuming that, if a person is either gifted or talented, that person bears an automatic societal obligation to develop and utilize such gifts and talents. If this were routinely followed, we would be denying, to gifted and talented persons, the same individual freedom to choose one's lifestyle and control one's own destiny that we hold to be sacred for all American youth. There is no youth who should be "sentenced" to attending college simply because his measured I.Q. is above 140. It is entirely possible that one might find a boy or girl with an I.Q. this high who really wants to be, for example, an auto mechanic. Career education would contend that he or she has every right to make that choice so long as all possible options are clearly understood. It would not necessarily be bad either for the individual or for the society if this were to happen occasionally.

Sixth, and perhaps of greatest importance, there is a danger of assuming that the gifted and talented have special responsibilities to use their gifts and/or talents in the world of paid employment. Those of us in career education would be especially opposed to acceptance of that assumption. There surely must be many gifted and talented persons who, while finding many ways to use their gifts and talents in the total work they perform, do not choose to use them as primary tools in the world of paid employment. The work values of individuals are, of course, part of their total system of personal values. Gifted and talented persons have as much right to freedom of choice in values as do any other persons. If they choose to labor at a menial job for purposes of simply gaining enough money to meet their survival needs, and then use their gifts or talents to really work, in a personally meaningful way, as part of their leisure time, they should certainly be allowed to do so.

Special career choice problems facing gifted and talented females, minority persons, and low-income persons in our current culture are so well known as to require no real discussion here. I mention them only to make sure we are all reminded of the serious challenges facing all of us to be active change agents in a soceity that discriminates and limits full freedom of career choices for such persons.

I have purposely concentrated on specifying problems here rather than presenting a list of special advantages gifted and talented persons have in making career education work for them. I do so because, to me, such problems are, in effect, challenges to act, not obstacles to action. If career education is to become an effective force in the education of gifted and talented persons, it will be necessary for specialists in career

education to learn much more about the gifted and talented than most now do. It will be similarly necessary that those who are specialists in education of the gifted and talented learn more about career education. I would hope that these remarks may serve as an initial beginning in this effort.

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